



News for Immediate Release  
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**DWR Submits Water Desalination Findings and Recommendations**

Sacramento - The California Department of Water Resources is distributing the key findings and recommendations based on input and advice from the Water Desalination Task Force. Assembly Bill 2717 (Hertzberg), directed the Department to convene a Water Desalination Task Force to advise the Department on the opportunities and potential impediments associated with desalination, and what role, if any, the State should take in furthering desalination. The Task Force, which deliberated for five months, was comprised of representatives of 27 organizations including State, local, and federal agencies, water districts, and environmental groups, among others.

A primary finding of the Department is that economically and environmentally acceptable desalination should be considered as part of a balanced water supply portfolio to help meet California's existing and future water supply and environmental needs. This is linked to one of the major recommendations, that desalination facilities should be evaluated on a case-by-case basis given locally based water supply and reliability needs, environmental considerations, project objectives, and planning issues.

Other major findings were that brine disposal from ocean desalination can be effectively managed, however the entrainment of marine organisms by seawater intakes can be a larger issue; that for desalination of brackish groundwater, brine disposal is the major issue; and that energy use for currently proposed desalination projects would use less than 1/2 of one-percent of the State's existing energy generating capacity.

In addition, it is recommended that greater attention be given to siting issues associated with desalination facilities; stronger links be developed between approved General Plans and local water supply options such as desalination; and coordination be improved among permitting and regulatory agencies.

The Department looked at the opportunities and impediments associated with various desalination processes, including those of seawater, estuarine, and brackish groundwater

desalination. Although much of the renewed focus on desalination has been associated with seawater, currently there is a much larger amount of brackish groundwater being desalinated in California. Over time, however, this trend is likely to shift toward greater use of seawater given the inexhaustible supply, and assuming the economic and environmental issues identified by the Task Force process can be adequately addressed.

The Task Force advised the Department on a wide variety of issues, such as:

- Value and benefit of increased water reliability from desalination;
- Recent advances in desalination technology;
- Costs and energy consumption associated with desalination;
- Ecological and environmental impacts of feedwater intake and brine/concentrate discharge;
- Land use compatibility, visual effects, public access, and other planning matters;
- Growth inducement, especially in the coastal zone;
- Environmental justice considerations;
- Public and private ownership and associated international trade implications; and
- Permitting and regulatory requirements.

Joining DWR as Co-Chairs of the Task Force were the State Water Resources Control Board, State Department of Health Services, State Energy Commission, and the California Coastal Commission. The Center for Collaborative Policy (a unit of California State University, Sacramento) provided facilitation and strategic planning services for the Task Force.

Meetings were held throughout the State, and three public workshops were conducted in association with Task Force deliberations. These meetings were held in Carlsbad, Sausalito, and Monterey, where desalination facilities either exist or are proposed. The public debate on this issue was often spirited, but in the end the Task Force concluded that desalination could be a benefit to the State in cases where it is economically and environmentally feasible.

For more information on the Water Desalination Task Force, including a copy of the Findings and Recommendations, visit the Desalination web site:

<http://www.owue.water.ca.gov/recycle/desal/desal.cfm>

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The Department of Water Resources operates and maintains the State Water Project, provides dam safety and flood control and inspection services, assists local water districts in water management and water conservation planning, and plans for future statewide water needs.

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